



## Mercaptopurine (Purinethol®, 6-MP)

*At the Clinical Center referred to as 6-MP.*

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**How Given:** Orally (by mouth).

**Drug Action:** 6-MP blocks a protein that cancer cells need to copy and repair DNA. DNA is the genetic material in cells used to make new cells.

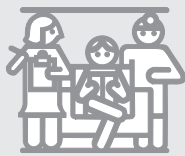
**Side Effects:**

1. Bone marrow effects can include a temporary decrease in white blood cells, platelets, and red blood cells. These usually occur within 1 to 3 weeks after treatment.
2. Nausea and vomiting can occur within 4 to 8 hours after starting 6-MP.
3. Lip, mouth, and throat sores can occur within 4 to 6 days after starting 6-MP.
4. Stomach cramps and diarrhea can occur.
5. Skin darkening, or a dry, scaly rash can occur.
6. 6-MP can affect your liver. Tests will be done to monitor for this effect.

**Special Instructions:**

1. Take your daily oral dose of 6-MP all at one time.
2. Tell your NIH doctor if you are taking the medication allopurinol (Zyloprim®). Your 6-MP dose may need to be reduced.
3. Do not take any prescription or over-the-counter medications without talking to your NIH doctor. These include vitamins; herbal treatments; nose drops; or cold, flu, headache, pain, hay fever, and allergy medications.

4. Do not take aspirin or aspirin-containing products unless prescribed by your NIH doctor.
5. Call your NIH doctor or nurse if you
  - are unable to take your 6-MP
  - are unable to drink for more than 1 day or unable to eat for more than 2 days after treatment
  - have diarrhea for more than 2 days
  - have a temperature of 101.0 °F (38.3 °C) at any time, or have a temperature of at least 100.4° F (38.0 °C) that lasts 1 hour or occurs two times within a 24-hour period
  - have unusual bleeding or bruising



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Living with Cancer Chemotherapy Series  
January 1983; draft, October 1999; Approved February 2001  
National Institutes of Health, CC Nursing Department

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